

THE HENRY L. STIMSON CENTER

# **AN AMERICAN LEGACY**

## **Building a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World**

*Final Report of the Steering Committee  
Project on Eliminating Weapons of Mass Destruction*

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Chair  
General Andrew J. Goodpaster (USA, Ret.)

Report No. 22 March 1997



*Pragmatic steps toward ideal objectives*



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## **AN AMERICAN LEGACY**

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Henry L. Stimson's distinguished career in defense and foreign policy spanned four decades in which the United States grew into its new role as a global power. As secretary of war under President William Howard Taft, Stimson concentrated on reforms to streamline the US Army. When the United States entered World War I, he volunteered his services at the age of forty-nine, and served as an artillery officer on the front lines in France. As Herbert Hoover's secretary of state in 1930, he negotiated the London Naval Treaty for the United States. He rejoined the government in 1940 as Franklin D. Roosevelt's secretary of war and managed both the buildup and operations of a twelve-million-person armed force engaged in conflict in all parts of the globe. His responsibilities during this last phase of his career included the development of the atomic bomb. His last preoccupation in office, and in the last few years of his life, was how this devastating weapon could be controlled.

We admire Henry L. Stimson's nonpartisan spirit and his sense of purpose. He had an ability to set long-range national security goals clearly and to steer a steady course toward them, combining idealism with pragmatism. By establishing a research center in his name, we hope to call attention to the issues he cared about, as well as to his record of public service, and to propose, as did Stimson, pragmatic steps toward ideal objectives.

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## ABOUT THIS REPORT



In January 1994, the Henry L. Stimson Center launched a project intended to encourage policy-makers, both in the United States and in other countries, to give serious consideration to the complete elimination of weapons of mass destruction from all countries as a long-term policy objective. At the time, the idea of a world without nuclear weapons was largely confined to the margins of political debate.

That situation has changed fundamentally in the three years since we began our efforts to legitimize, facilitate, and encourage serious debate about the long-term future of nuclear weapons. The Committee's second report, *An Evolving US Nuclear Posture* (December 1995), offered one set of ideas about how to achieve the progressive elimination of nuclear weapons and about the political conditions under which this goal might be realized. Since the release of that report, a growing number of respected senior retired military commanders, government officials, and scholars, including the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, have declared their support for pursuit of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Indeed, the debate has broadened to include the consideration of the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.

In undertaking this work, we have been motivated by the belief that it is time to examine the assumptions that guide US nuclear policy, and to debate the long-term future—including the possibility that nuclear weapons might someday be eliminated entirely.

Those who are skeptical of elimination as a policy objective counter that the goal is "utopian" and "unachievable." They assert that an elimination regime would be impossible to verify, and that a world without nuclear weapons would be a world of more, not less, war. They caution against the destabilizing effects of renunciation for US foreign policy and for political relations with the United States' closest allies. They ask US leaders to focus on the feasible and achievable rather than squandering time and resources debating a goal that is beyond reach.

In our view, it is far too soon to end the debate about the long-term nuclear future. We have only begun to understand the nuclear past; many more questions must be answered before we can discern the shape of the nuclear future.

Many assertions, for example, are made about the role of nuclear weapons in the Cold War. In fact, there is very little that we can know with certainty. We do know of course that there was no nuclear war between the Soviet Union and the United States and its allies. Were nuclear weapons the primary reason a "hot war" did not occur, as most people believe? What risks were associated with reliance on nuclear weapons for US national security? What are the "lessons" of the Cold War? What "lessons" have other nations learned about the value of nuclear weapons? What effect might further near-term steps to reduce nuclear dangers, or pursuit of the goal of eventual elimination, have on the global political climate, or on perceptions of nuclear weapons' value and, thereby, on global non-proliferation efforts?

At the same time, we note and welcome the increasing interest in near-term steps to reduce nuclear dangers. Many who reject the pursuit of elimination acknowledge that

further reductions in arsenals are possible and desirable. And support for similar actions with regard to chemical and biological weapons is growing.

This third, and final, report of the Steering Committee is intended to provide additional impetus for this nascent debate. We hope to advance thinking both about near-term efforts to reduce nuclear dangers and about the ultimate objective of US policy. We do not view these two aspects of the discussion of nuclear futures as mutually exclusive. Rather, they are linked integrally.

We all support the general thrust of the report and its general conclusions, but obviously should not be held responsible for every specific phrase or nuance of wording. Where individual members are in strong disagreement with particular points, dissenting views have been expressed in footnotes to the text.

We would like to thank the Henry L. Stimson Center for organizing this project, Cathleen Fisher for directing it and drafting this report, and the Ford Foundation for providing financial support.

SIGNED,

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**AN AMERICAN LEGACY**

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## SUMMARY



A world in which all weapons of mass destruction (WMD) had been eliminated from all countries would be a safer world for America. Achievement of that goal—if it can be achieved—will require extraordinary efforts over many years. In the near-term, much more can and should be done to ensure that future generations are safe from the threats posed by nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. But the United States, and President Clinton, must be willing to lead.

**Immediate Steps:** Action is urgently needed to achieve the security gains promised by three important agreements:

- ◆ The President and his senior advisors should work personally to secure Senate ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which has been signed by the United States and over 150 other nations.
- ◆ The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which promises to end all nuclear tests for all time, is a major step toward reducing nuclear dangers. President Clinton should submit it to the US Senate soon, and it should be ratified speedily.
- ◆ START II is in the security interests of both the United States and Russia, but has not yet been ratified by the Russian State Duma. To facilitate Russian ratification of the accord, the United States and Russia should begin immediately to negotiate a Statement of Principles for a “START III” agreement.

**The Near-term Agenda:** Further independent initiatives and cooperative steps to reduce nuclear dangers would be in the US national security interest:

- ◆ A “blank sheet” review of US nuclear policy, under presidential direction, should be undertaken immediately. The potential benefits and costs of continued reliance on nuclear deterrence and on US nuclear security assurances—including the implications of US nuclear policy for non-proliferation objectives—should be evaluated intensively; outdated principles and practices should be discarded.
- ◆ US-Russian cooperation to enhance nuclear safety and security should be intensified. The Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program is a wise national security investment. The President and the Congress should support a significant increase in CTR funding and a broadening of the program’s scope.
- ◆ The United States should redouble its efforts to conclude an agreement banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.
- ◆ The United States should invite the other declared nuclear weapon states to join in the dialogue on nuclear threat reduction, beginning perhaps with the creation of a system and database to account for all nuclear materials around the world.

**Advancing the Long-term Goal:** The ultimate objective of US national security policy should be the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction from all states—not the preservation of nuclear deterrence in perpetuity. This goal should frame our thinking about nuclear weapons and about other weapons of mass destruction and should influence our planning, both in the near- and long-term.

A long-term strategy to achieve the elimination of all WMD must be anchored in the vigorous pursuit of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Only a serious commitment to cooperative nuclear disarmament is likely to provide the momentum necessary to drive forward the process of eliminating all weapons of mass destruction.

- ◆ The President should commit the United States unequivocally to work with other nations to seek the ultimate elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.
- ◆ The President should direct executive agencies to develop a work plan for how the goal of eliminating all weapons of mass destruction can be reached responsibly and in a manner consistent with US national security interests. The work plan would identify the problems that must be overcome on the path to elimination and describe the steps that must be taken if solutions to these problems are to be found.

We may not see today how a world without weapons of mass destruction can be created, or how long it will take to reach that goal. But Americans often have achieved the most when they have envisioned and pursued with serious intent goals that require extraordinary efforts over many years. The uncertainties regarding the time in which elimination could be achieved or the technical solutions that must be found should not prevent us from making efforts in this direction. Indeed, we believe that we are only likely to achieve the progress that is possible now if the United States re-commits in earnest to the dedicated pursuit of a world without nuclear weapons.

# AN AMERICAN LEGACY

## Building a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World

*Final Report of the Steering Committee  
Project on Eliminating Weapons of Mass Destruction*



In the last several years, US leadership and influence have made Americans more secure from the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction. Cold War stockpiles of nuclear weapons are being reduced through joint implementation of US–Russian arms control agreements. In cooperation with other countries, the United States has helped to ensure the safe transport and dismantlement of nuclear weapons in Russia, and to persuade Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine to give up the nuclear weapons they inherited from the Soviet Union. Agreements have been concluded to end over fifty years of nuclear testing, and to ban all chemical weapons. The nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has been extended indefinitely. These are important accomplishments.

But more can and must be done if future Americans are to be safe from the threats posed by nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

A world in which all weapons of mass destruction had been completely eliminated from all countries would be a safer world for the United States. The United States is already committed by treaty to pursue the elimination of nuclear weapons. That commitment has lacked credibility, however, because US leaders have failed to focus American energies and resources on determining how that objective, in fact, might be achieved safely and responsibly.

This goal certainly will not be easy to achieve. American leadership, vision, and moral courage will be demanded, and all states must be involved in the elimination process. We believe, however, that there can be no greater gift to future generations than to embrace the goal of a world without weapons of mass destruction, and to work diligently for its creation.

**A world in which all  
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# Unfinished Business

**S**ince the end of the Cold War, two Presidents and four Congresses have worked together to diminish the risks associated with Cold War nuclear postures and practices and to address emerging dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction. If these gains can be consolidated, the foundation for a more secure America will be in place.

- ◆ *Cold War stockpiles of nuclear weapons are shrinking.* The competition between the United States and the Soviet Union resulted in the accumulation of large numbers of nuclear weapons. Reciprocated unilateral measures and cooperative implementation of negotiated arms control agreements are helping to pare these Cold War inventories. If START II is fully implemented, the United States and Russia will have succeeded in reducing their stockpiles of deployed strategic nuclear weapons by roughly two-thirds from Cold War highs.

## REDUCING NUCLEAR DANGERS

### Accomplishments . . .

- ◆ Completion of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)
- ◆ Indefinite extension of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)
- ◆ Significant reductions in Cold War nuclear stockpiles
- ◆ "Nuclear rollback" in Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus
- ◆ Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program to improve nuclear safety and security in the former Soviet Union

- ◆ With US assistance, nuclear threats in the former Soviet Union have been diminished. The end of the East-West conflict made a deliberate nuclear exchange between the two former adversaries unlikely, but the subsequent collapse of the Soviet state also resulted in the creation of new nuclear threats. When the Soviet Union dissolved in December 1991, the Soviet nuclear arsenal was spread over the territories of four independent states—Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. In addition, continuing political, economic, and social turmoil throughout the former Soviet Union heightened the risks of nuclear accidents and of leakage or theft of nuclear materials.

Progress has been made in the past several years toward addressing these new nuclear dangers. First, US initiatives and far-sighted leadership in Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine were essential in persuading these countries to relinquish the nuclear weapons left on their territory after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Due to the efforts of both the Bush and Clinton administrations, over 3,000 strategic nuclear warheads have been transferred from the three republics to Russia for dismantlement. By November 1996, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus had all joined the ranks of the nations that have rejected reliance on nuclear weapons as a basis for their national security.

In addition, the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program has provided valuable technical advice, equipment, and other kinds of assistance to transport, safeguard, and dismantle nuclear weapons in the former Soviet republics. With sustained bipartisan

congressional support, CTR funds have been used to finance the removal from operation of over 4,000 strategic nuclear warheads;<sup>1</sup> to facilitate the dismantlement and destruction of systems affected by START limitations; to ensure the safe interim storage of fissile materials removed from dismantled warheads; and to provide approximately 12,500 former Soviet nuclear weapon scientists with alternative employment.

- ◆ After over forty years of efforts, a treaty banning all nuclear tests for all time has been completed. On September 24, 1996, the United States was the first country to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which promises to end five decades of nuclear testing and to curb future efforts to develop new or more advanced nuclear weapons. The treaty represents the culmination of efforts by both Democratic and Republican Presidents to conclude a treaty intended to achieve a complete ban on the testing of nuclear weapons.
- ◆ The nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has been extended indefinitely. The nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is widely regarded as the cornerstone of global efforts to halt the spread of nuclear weapons to new countries or regions. In April 1995, an extensive review of the accord by all state parties was conducted, as required by the treaty's terms. At issue was whether the accord should be granted a new lease on life. Many states, including the United States, spearheaded the movement to extend the treaty indefinitely. After intensive negotiations, 170 state signatories agreed to support the indefinite extension of the NPT, a victory for non-proliferation efforts due in no small part to strong American support for extension.

The steps undertaken in the last several years are important components of a long-term strategy to eliminate nuclear dangers. Yet, recent progress toward safely dismantling the nuclear inheritance of the Cold War and toward strengthening the international norm against proliferation should not lead to a false sense of complacency. Many of these modest successes could still be reversed. If the security gains promised by START II, the Chemical Weapons Convention (cwc), and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty are to be achieved, the President and Congress must act now.

**★ First, steps must be taken to ensure full implementation of the reductions codified in START II.**

The future of the START II treaty currently hangs in the balance. The US Senate ratified the treaty in January 1996, but the accord faces stiff opposition in the Russian State Duma. Many Russian representatives distrust US motives, and find validation of their suspicions in the imminent expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which they perceive to be directed against Russia. Fears of the unrestrained development of missile defenses and the subsequent erosion of Russia's nuclear deterrent also are influencing Russian views on START II ratification. In addition, implementation of the

**... and Unfinished Business**

- ◆ To secure START II reductions, negotiate a Statement of Principles for "START III"
- ◆ Ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention and pass the necessary implementing legislation
- ◆ Urge the Senate to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty speedily

treaty would impose heavy financial burdens on an already strained state budget, both to support the dismantlement and destruction of systems affected by the treaty, and to replace Russia's aging land-based intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) force to reach START II limits. In light of the delays in securing ratification and the financial stringencies in the

Russian Federation, many Russians consider the stipulated time line for implementation of the required reductions to be unrealistic as well. Overall, the prospects for Russian ratification of START II appear questionable.

**Under current conditions, the strategic requirements of both countries could be met at lower levels.**

START II is in the security interests of both the United States and Russia. Under current conditions, the strategic requirements of both countries could be met at lower levels. Moreover, despite the continuing uncertainty regarding the future of Russian political and economic reforms, Americans will be safer if Russia is armed with fewer nuclear weapons. Formal ratification of START II by the Russian State Duma is desirable,

and the President therefore should work to address Russian concerns regarding START II in a way that at the same time protects US security interests.

The United States should begin immediately to negotiate with Russia a Statement of Principles that would outline the terms of a "START III" agreement, as was proposed by the Atlantic Council in 1996. Such a framework agreement, which would only go into effect when the Duma ratifies START II, could contain several elements designed to address legitimate Russian concerns regarding the provisions of START II:

- ◆ To lessen Russian apprehensions about the possible eastward deployment of tactical nuclear weapons through NATO enlargement, both countries would commit themselves to make no additions to the current deployment of nuclear weapons located on the territory of other countries during the negotiation of either the Statement of Principles or of a "START III" agreement. This bilateral commitment would reinforce NATO's independent declaration of December 1996 that the alliance has "no intention, no plan and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members."<sup>2</sup>
- ◆ The agreement would specify further that any future negotiated reductions on nuclear weapons would apply to both tactical and strategic warheads.
- ◆ The United States and Russia would agree to negotiate substantially lower levels of nuclear warheads in "START III," possibly to a level of 2,000 warheads each, as some Russians have proposed, as a way station to even deeper reductions.

**★ *Second, the President and the Congress should recognize that the post-Cold War world requires our strongest efforts to persuade other nations to relinquish chemical and biological weapons.***

A host of measures, including arms control agreements and defensive measures, will be required.

The United States and over 150 other nations have signed the Chemical Weapons Convention, and nearly 70 have already ratified it, including most of the United States'

allies and trading partners, as well as major regional leaders. The United States, however, has yet to ratify the treaty, which was withdrawn from consideration by the US Senate in September 1996, when it appeared that it might be defeated. If the US fails to ratify this treaty, which was largely negotiated in the Reagan and Bush administrations and should enjoy bipartisan support, Russia is unlikely to ratify the accord either. In this event, over 70,000 tons of chemical weapons will not be covered by the convention, which will become a hollow shell.

If the cwc is rendered meaningless through US inaction, negotiations to provide the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) with a verification protocol and initiatives to reduce nuclear dangers could be stymied as well. Without progress toward controlling and reducing chemical and biological weapons, some government officials and defense analysts in this country and overseas will continue to assert the need to retain—or acquire—nuclear weapons as countermeasures.

In the near-term, the President and his senior advisors should be personally engaged in securing Senate ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention, along with passage of the necessary implementing legislation. Furthermore, in our view, the United States should not rely on the threat of nuclear retaliation to deter or respond to attacks with chemical and biological weapons. A combination of strong conventional forces, implementation of the cwc, a strengthened BWC, and a comprehensive program of active and passive defensive measures for the United States and its allies can reduce significantly the damage from chemical and biological weapons. To do otherwise, to maintain that nuclear weapons are a necessary deterrent to the use of chemical or biological weapons legitimates the acquisition and retention of nuclear weapons by others.

★ ***Third, the President should urge the US Senate to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty speedily and, at any rate, before the crucial three-year waiting period has ended.***

The successful conclusion of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was a major achievement for the United States. Redoubled efforts will be necessary, however, if the accord is to enter into force. Under the terms of Article XIV, forty-four states designated in an annex to the treaty—including the five declared nuclear weapon states, the three “threshold” nuclear weapon states, India, Pakistan, and Israel, and such would-be proliferators as Iran and North Korea—must ratify the CTBT, in order for the treaty to enter into force. If, after three years, all of these designated states have not ratified the treaty, an extraordinary conference could be convened among the states that have deposited their instruments of ratification to consider measures to “accelerate the ratification process.” This complex entry-into-force formula could delay full implementation of the accord, perhaps for many years.

Until the treaty enters into force, the United States should continue to abide by the terms of the treaty and work to ensure that other nuclear-capable states do likewise. The US Senate should promptly ratify the CTBT, to set an example for other states, and the US should work through diplomatic means to persuade all other states to ratify the treaty themselves.

## **Next Steps Toward Reducing Nuclear Dangers**

**I**n the near-term, the steps outlined above are essential building blocks of a policy to ensure that Americans are secure from the threats posed by nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. But a greater measure of security is achievable under current political conditions and without regard to the long-term future of nuclear weapons—if the United States will lead, both through independent actions and in cooperation with Russia and other states committed to reducing nuclear dangers.



THE UNITED STATES cannot and should not undertake unilateral disarmament. All states must be included in the process of progressively reducing nuclear dangers.

At times, however, independent US undertakings can be useful in spurring other states to action. The September 1991 initiatives by President George Bush demonstrate the potent effect of US example. In a single resolute stroke, Bush outlined a ten-point plan to enhance nuclear stability and security, including the elimination of all US ground-

launched theater nuclear weapons; the removal of all tactical nuclear weapons from US surface ships and attack submarines, and the withdrawal of nuclear weapons for land-based naval aircraft; and the removal of all US strategic bombers and all 450 Minuteman II ICBMs from day-to-day alert operations. Eight days later, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev matched the American initiatives, point by point, with similar actions. At that time, Gorbachev also declared a one-year moratorium on all nuclear weapon tests, and called on the other nuclear weapon states to cease nuclear testing as well. President Bush's initiative and the reciprocal actions ordered by President Gorbachev led to the removal of over 8,000 tactical nuclear weapons from deployment. The threat of nuclear annihilation that had shadowed

both countries for over four decades was lessened.

If President Clinton is willing to act independently, the United States can both reap immediate security gains and build a firmer foundation for US security in the twenty-first century.

- ★ **A fundamental "blank sheet" review and revision of US nuclear policy, under presidential direction, should be undertaken immediately.**

Since the completion of the Nuclear Posture Review in September 1994, an animated debate about alternative nuclear postures and policies has developed in Washington and

elsewhere. Outside of official policy-making circles, numerous alternatives are under review, including continuing substantial reductions, a posture of minimum deterrence, the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, or the movement to “virtual nuclear arsenals.”

In contrast, the basic principles guiding official US nuclear policy remain little changed from the time of the Cold War. Despite the dramatic improvement in their political relations, the United States and Russia each retain the ability to destroy immediately the other as a society. Although the two countries have taken the symbolic action of detargeting their strategic nuclear missiles, both states still maintain forces on a high state of alert and conduct operations to prepare for rapid reaction, mass attacks against each other.

US national security is ill-served by many of these practices. Planning and operations that imply the massive use of nuclear weapons against Russian targets undermine our efforts to build a more cooperative relationship with Russia. Fifty years of Cold War with the Soviet Union were costly and dangerous. It should be a matter of the highest priority to avoid a reversion to the nuclear competition of the past.

In addition, the United States’ current reliance on the threat of nuclear retaliation for any other purpose than to deter other nuclear threats may be of waning credibility and legitimacy in the post-Cold War world. For many, it is virtually inconceivable that the United States would use nuclear weapons in response to an attack with conventional, chemical, or biological weapons. And international acceptance of the threat of first-use against non-nuclear weapon states appears to be waning. The “Principles and Objectives” adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference call for further progress toward providing non-nuclear weapon states with legally binding assurances that they will not be attacked with nuclear weapons. The issue is likely to feature prominently at subsequent review conferences. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling in July 1996 on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons could also signal waning acceptance of a broad definition of nuclear roles. While the Court did not rule the threat or use of nuclear weapons unlawful “in an extreme circumstance of self-defense, in which the very survival of the State would be at stake,” it did find that threat or use of nuclear weapons was generally “contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law.”<sup>3</sup> The nuclear weapon states have interpreted the Court’s decision as an endorsement of nuclear deterrence. The political—if not legal—effect of the ICJ decision may be a further narrowing of the legitimate role of nuclear weapons.

The Department of Defense will have the central role to play in this review process, but other key agencies must be included as well. Presidential involvement and oversight are essential to ensure that the perspectives of all important agencies are integrated into this review.

Both the potential benefits and the political and military costs of continued reliance on nuclear deterrence must be evaluated. Other high-priority national interests, both near- and long-term, not the least of which are US non-proliferation objectives and efforts, must be taken into consideration.

**In contrast, the basic principles guiding official US nuclear policy remain little changed from the time of the Cold War.**

The presumption that the United States must retain the option of first-use of nuclear weapons should be the subject of intensive review and study. While the risks of regional proliferation are real, and the United States must be prepared to protect US and allied forces and civilians both at home and abroad from attacks with biological or chemical weapons, the United States' decisive edge in conventional weaponry, coupled with available defensive measures, offers a more credible alternative to reliance on the threat of nuclear retaliation as a response against a possible attack with chemical weapons. An attack with biological weapons that resulted in the loss of many American lives could generate tremendous political pressure on US leaders to respond proportionately. There is little consensus, however, about whether a US President, in fact, would order the first use of nuclear weapons under such circumstances. Some would find a nuclear response credible; others would not. The development of effective countermeasures against biological weapon threats should be a matter of high priority in any event.

The implications of a no-first-use (NFU) policy for allies that currently depend on US nuclear security assurances, and the impact on would-be proliferators, must also be considered. On the one hand, any explicitly stated role for nuclear weapons as deterrents of biological or chemical threats may have negative consequences for efforts to halt the proliferation of these weapons. Our continued reliance on nuclear weapons could be taken

by others as an endorsement of their value and utility, thus undercutting US non-proliferation objectives. Alternatively, any change in US policy to reduce our reliance on nuclear weapons could be viewed as a weakening of the American security commitment and, perhaps, cause some close US allies to reevaluate the value of an independent nuclear deterrent. In the course of reviewing US nuclear policy, such trade-offs must be evaluated seriously and in depth. If political conditions at the current juncture do not permit the United States to adopt NFU, then at a minimum, the United States should declare that it would never be the first to use weapons of mass destruction. Such a change in declaratory policy must of course be done in close consultation with the United States' allies and should be coupled with strong efforts to provide non-nuclear alternatives to deter or respond to attacks with chemical and biological weapons that might be both more credible and more discriminate.

Where operational practices have outlived their usefulness, or are harmful to US national security, they should be altered or discarded. In the changed strategic

### **A "BLANK SHEET" REVIEW OF US NUCLEAR POLICY**

*The President should direct an intensive review of the principles and assumptions that guide US nuclear policy, including:*

- ◆ *the potential benefits and the political and military costs of continued reliance on nuclear deterrence*
- ◆ *the impact of US nuclear policy on US non-proliferation objectives and efforts*
- ◆ *the implications of a no-first-use (NFU) policy for allies that currently depend on US nuclear security assurances, as well as the impact on would-be proliferators*
- ◆ *the benefits and risks of current operational practices in the changed strategic environment*
- ◆ *the implications of reduced nuclear reliance for US conventional forces, and for the development of non-nuclear alternatives to deter or respond to attacks with chemical and biological weapons*

environment, US nuclear planning should be guided by a presumption against the massive use of nuclear weapons, and directed toward guaranteeing the United States the maximum flexibility in targeting. It is also time to review current alert practices with an eye toward increasing the delay time for retaliation, ours and the Russians' in particular but, it is hoped, also those of other countries. Under current circumstances, scenarios in which massive and immediate nuclear retaliation would be necessary are increasingly improbable. In addition, measures to increase response time would reduce the chances of hasty, ill-considered decisions to use nuclear weapons, and of unauthorized and accidental launches.

Finally, as steps are taken to diminish US reliance on nuclear weapons for its national security, companion measures to ensure that the United States retains the ability to defend its interests and allies will be essential. In particular, the narrowing utility of our nuclear weapons and the risks of proliferation will require the United States to maintain very credible and powerful conventional military forces.



ALTHOUGH LIMITED, INDEPENDENT American actions may be appropriate in some instances, reducing nuclear dangers more often will require cooperative partnerships. The most immediate task is to work with Russia to eliminate Cold War excesses, and to enhance nuclear safety and security. In addition, efforts to conclude an agreement banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons should be intensified. It is not too soon, moreover, to begin expanding the dialogue on nuclear threat reduction to include the other nuclear weapon states.

**★ *US-Russian cooperation to reduce nuclear dangers should be intensified and expanded.***

As noted above, the most urgent near-term task is to ensure the further dismantlement of the large nuclear stockpiles accumulated during the Cold War, but reviewing operational measures and enhancing nuclear safety should be given high priority in bilateral discussions as well.

The United States should propose reciprocal steps to reduce alert levels, and to codify other changes in operational practices. For example, President Clinton's largely symbolic agreement with Russian President Boris Yeltsin to de-target strategic missiles could be buttressed by joint actions to move toward a "zero-alert" posture, such as an agreement to remove all ICBMs and bombers from alert. Discussions on broader questions of nuclear doctrine and the role of nuclear weapons in bilateral relations could also be initiated.

Additional steps to address concerns about the leakage of nuclear weapons and materials in Russia are also urgently needed. The Cooperative Threat Reduction Program is a wise national security investment and deserves the continued support of the President

**The most immediate task is to work with Russia to eliminate Cold War excesses.**

and of Congress. A freeze on CTR funds in the event that START II stalls in the Russian State Duma would be short-sighted and would damage the very interest in enhancing nuclear safety and security in the former Soviet Union that we are attempting to serve. The President should urge Congress to sustain funding and support for the CTR program. Indeed, a broadening of the scope of the CTR program and a significant increase in the funds made available to it should be high on the President's and the Congress' agendas.

**★ *The United States should intensify its efforts to conclude an agreement banning the production of fissile material for weapons use.***

Although the "Principles and Objectives" agreed at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference called for "immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations" for a ban on the production of fissile material for weapons, little concrete progress has been made. A cut-off is widely viewed as an important step toward capping the development of nuclear weapons in the threshold and declared nuclear weapon states alike. Now that the Conference on Disarmament has finished negotiating the CTBT, efforts to negotiate a cut-off will be renewed. The United States should continue to try to build international support for a cut-off and to discourage countries from linking progress on a cut-off to other agendas, such as a specific timetable for disarmament.

**★ *Working with Russia, the United States should try to expand the dialogue on nuclear threat reduction to include all nuclear weapon states.***

As the United States and Russia intensify their cooperative efforts to reduce nuclear dangers, preparations for a multilateral dialogue among all the nuclear weapon states should begin.

As a first step, either independently or jointly with Russia, the United States should invite the other declared nuclear weapon states to enter into discussions of issues of common concern. Such a dialogue might begin with consideration of important technical issues, including the five countries' respective mechanisms to ensure the safety and security of nuclear materials and weapons, and the establishment of common systems and standards for accounting for all nuclear materials. Over time, other topics might be incorporated into the dialogue, including aspects of nuclear doctrine, respective views on the roles of nuclear weapons in mutual relations, and approaches to regional and global proliferation challenges.

**The Cooperative Threat Reduction Program is a wise national security investment and deserves the continued support of the President and of Congress.**

Britain in discussions of measures to enhance nuclear transparency and accountability should not dissuade American leaders from trying. At the height of the Cold War, the

United States and the Soviet Union were often at loggerheads during arms control negotiations, yet the two countries achieved notable successes in stabilizing their nuclear competition. And although the United States and its closest allies have sometimes differed on nuclear policy, decades of political, military, and economic cooperation provide a robust foundation for a dialogue on nuclear transparency and security.

## **Building a Legacy for the 21st Century**

### **Toward the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons**

**W**e have no illusions that the steps as outlined will be easy. They will require the concerted efforts of America's political and military leaders, our best technical expertise, and significant financial and human resources. Given the difficulties that undoubtedly will attend the program as outlined, many may ask, why attempt to undertake even more ambitious goals? Indeed, by reaching too far, do we not run the risk of losing the real security gains that might be attained through steps short of that goal?

We disagree with this perspective. As noted above, many steps can and must be undertaken now. But our near-term efforts to reduce nuclear dangers should be guided by the commitment to a goal that, under present circumstances, is beyond our reach.

**As we stand on  
the threshold of a  
new century, we must  
ask, what ends will  
American power and  
influence serve?**

The ultimate objective of US national security policy should be the elimination of all nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons from all states—not the preservation of nuclear deterrence in perpetuity. This objective should frame our thinking about nuclear weapons and influence our planning, both in the near- and long-term. The goal of a world without mass destruction weapons may never be achieved. It is certainly unlikely to be achieved unless efforts to progressively eliminate nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons proceed in parallel.

But unless we make elimination the guidepost for our efforts, we may never achieve the greater measure of security for America and all nations that is achievable even short of that goal.

A long-term strategy to achieve the elimination of all WMD must be anchored in the vigorous pursuit of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Only a serious commitment to cooperative nuclear disarmament is likely to provide the momentum necessary to drive forward the process of eliminating all weapons of mass destruction.



ONCE RELEGATED TO the margins of political debate, the idea of a world without nuclear weapons has gained increasing acceptance. In December 1995, this Committee endorsed pursuit of the goal of eliminating all weapons of mass destruction from all countries. Since that time, other prominent political leaders and retired military commanders, including the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, an international body sponsored by the Australian government, have embraced this objective.<sup>4</sup> Over the coming year, other respected bodies, including the Committee on International Security

and Arms Control of the National Academy of Sciences, will issue reports exploring the long-term future of US nuclear weapons. Although these groups may envision different nuclear “end-states,” they share in common a conviction that it is time to consider the purposes of, and risks associated with, nuclear weapons, and the principles that will guide US nuclear policy in the future.

Many of these studies are motivated, at least in part, by a concern that the current nuclear non-proliferation regime may not be sustainable.

The indefinite extension of the NPT in May 1995 should not be interpreted as a resounding endorsement of the status quo. It certainly does not guarantee that the number of nuclear weapon states will remain frozen at current levels. Many governments remain deeply frustrated with the lack of progress toward the goal contained in Article VI of the treaty—the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. Unless the five declared nuclear weapon states make more vigorous efforts to meet their commitment to the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons, tolerance of the basic political inequity in the current arrangement could erode, placing the overall health and durability of the non-proliferation regime at risk.

A world of more nuclear weapons and more nuclear weapon states could pose serious threats to US national security interests and lives. The development and execution of an effective non-proliferation policy therefore must be one of our highest national priorities. In our view, a truly effective non-proliferation policy would be based on the recognition that US national security is best served by a policy aimed at creating, progressively and cautiously, a world in which all nuclear weapons have been eliminated from all states.

The United States has a pivotal role to play in the process of eliminating nuclear weapons.

The collapse of the bi-polar order and the daunting political and economic challenges currently faced by both Russia and China place the United States in a unique position in the global political system. America has great opportunities for action, and consequently bears grave responsibilities and burdens as well. As we stand on the threshold of a new century, we must ask, what ends will American power and influence serve? When future generations of Americans look back on the closing years of this century, how will they judge the actions of their leaders in protecting American lives, values, and interests?

In our view, there is no more important objective than the creation of a world free of the danger of nuclear annihilation. We call on America, and on President Clinton in particular, to champion the goal of a world in which nuclear weapons are eventually eliminated and to direct American energies and resources toward determining how that goal can be reached responsibly and in a manner consistent with US national security interests.

***In our view, there is no more important objective than the creation of a world free of the danger of nuclear annihilation.***

## **AN ACTION AGENDA**

### **Steps Toward Eliminating Weapons of Mass Destruction**

#### **Immediate Steps**

- ◆ Secure Senate ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)
- ◆ Encourage speedy ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)
- ◆ Negotiate with Russia a Statement of Principles for a "START III" agreement

#### **The Near-term Agenda**

- ◆ Direct a "blank sheet" review of US nuclear policy
- ◆ Intensify US-Russian cooperation to enhance nuclear safety and security; increase the funding and scope of the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program
- ◆ Redouble efforts to conclude a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons
- ◆ Invite the other declared nuclear weapon states to join in the dialogue on nuclear threat reduction

#### **Advancing the Long-term Goal**

- ◆ Commit the United States unequivocally to work with other nations to seek the ultimate elimination of all weapons of mass destruction
- ◆ Develop a work plan for how to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction responsibly and in a manner consistent with US national security interests

*An American Legacy: Building a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World  
Final Report of the Steering Committee  
Project on Eliminating Weapons of Mass Destruction*

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★ ***First, the President should commit the United States unequivocally to work with other nations to seek the ultimate elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.***

The United States already has pledged to pursue nuclear disarmament. This administration has a unique opportunity to make good on that pledge, and, in so doing, to give new impetus to global non-proliferation efforts, not only for nuclear weapons, but for chemical and biological weapons as well. The process must move forward carefully, in a manner that allows American leaders to be sure that US security interests are protected each step of the way. But the process must move forward now.

★ ***Second, the President should direct executive agencies to develop a responsible work plan for achieving this objective and to begin official study of the problems that will have to be overcome to achieve a world without nuclear weapons.\*†***

Substantial resources should be devoted toward developing a concrete plan for achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world and toward seeking solutions to the problems associated with progressive movement toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. How could an elimination regime be verified? What safeguards would be necessary to protect the United States and other nations against the risks of breakout? What combination of arms control, defensive measures, and conventional capabilities would be necessary to reduce the threats posed by other types of weapons of mass destruction? These and other issues should be the subject of serious and intensive review.



WE MAY NOT see today how the goal of a world free of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons can be achieved or how long it would take to achieve that goal. Few people could envision the end of the Cold War, yet the East-West conflict has been dismantled with remarkable rapidity through the dedicated efforts of committed leaders. And Americans often have achieved the most when they have envisioned and pursued with serious intent goals that require extraordinary efforts over many years. In May 1961, President John F.

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\* Victor Utgoff strongly supports the idea of a work program to identify and explore potential solutions to the problems involved in reducing nuclear weapons to very low levels and eventually to zero. Such a program would reveal important insights regarding how far nuclear reductions can and should go, how to manage nuclear arms control, and about how to maintain order and stability in a non-nuclear world. He remains skeptical about the value of additional near-term US commitments to eliminate nuclear weapons until a plausible plan for doing so has been found, and a careful assessment of the pros and cons of such commitments has been made. While additional near-term commitments to elimination could encourage serious efforts to identify practical plans for achieving it, they can also, for example, make it more difficult to sustain the political support, funding, managerial attention, and high quality technical effort needed to sustain a safe, credible, and reliable deterrent while the need to do so remains.

† W.Y. Smith believes that the proposed work plan must be developed in a manner that does not divert attention from concentrated efforts to achieve further reductions in the existing nuclear stockpiles of Russia and the United States.

Kennedy declared that the United States would seek to put a man on the moon within a decade, not because the goal would be easy to achieve, but “because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win . . .”<sup>5</sup> Yet, as Kennedy predicted, the presidential commitment focused great energy on the endeavor and, in the end, yielded great results.

The uncertainties regarding the time in which the elimination of weapons of mass destruction could be achieved and the technical solutions that must be found should not prevent us from making efforts in that direction. Indeed, we believe that we are only likely to achieve the progress that is possible now if the United States recommits in earnest to the dedicated pursuit of a world without nuclear weapons.

NOTES:

1. In the case of Ukraine, for example, CTR assistance in the safe and secure removal of ICBMs from operation involved the purchase of equipment to help in de-mating warheads from missiles, the transportation of warheads to storage facilities in Russia, the provision of an emergency response capability that traveled with the transport, and the securing of the storage site in Russia. For more information on the CTR program, see Department of Defense, Factsheet, “Specific CTR Program Accomplishments”; and Department of Defense, “CTR: Cooperative Threat Reduction” [web page] <http://www.dtic.dla.mil:80/defenselink/special/ctr/> [Accessed 13 February 1997].
2. Final Communiqué Issued at the Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council, 10 December 1996, M-NAC-2 (96) 165.
3. “International Court of Justice Issues Advisory Opinion on Legality of Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons,” International Court of Justice Press Release, ICJ/546, 8 July 1996.
4. Report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons (Canberra, Australia: August 1996). See also An Evolving US Nuclear Posture, Second Report of the Steering Committee, Project on Eliminating Weapons of Mass Destruction (Washington, DC: The Henry L. Stimson Center, December 1995). For the full text of the generals’ statement, see General Andrew J. Goodpaster and General Lee Butler, “Joint Statement on Reduction of Nuclear Weapon Arsenals: Declining Utility, Continuing Risk,” 4 December 1996; “Statement on Nuclear Weapons by International Generals and Admirals,” 5 December 1996, [web pages] <http://www.stimson.org/pub/stimson/generals>.
5. Speech to Rice University, 12 September 1962. The commitment to reach the moon within the decade was made in May 1961 in a speech before Congress.